

Rainforest Cities: Urbanization, Development, and Globalization of the Brazilian Amazon

John O. Browder and Brian J. Godfrey. Columbia University Press, New York, 1997. 429 pages. \$52, \$25.50 (paperback).

Traditional and Modern Natural Resource Management in Latin America

Francisco J. Pichón, Jorge E. Uquillas, and John Frechione, editors. University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA, 1999. 319 pages. \$45, \$19.95 (paperback).

For the past decade much of the urban and regional planning literature has been caught up in theoretical debates about globalization. This is so despite the fact that much of this theorizing has remained somewhat abstract and disconnected from grounded observations. These two books concerned with disparate subjects in third world contexts—the development of cities in Brazilian Amazonia, and traditional versus modern agricultural resource management techniques in Latin America—offer a different and useful perspective on globalization.

In *Rainforest Cities*, Browder and Godfrey study the processes driving change in the city systems of Brazilian Amazonia. They offer an evocative view of what they term "a pluralistic theory of disarticulated urbanization" (pp. 95-100). In chapter 2 they provide a succinct description of various frameworks for explaining frontier urbanization. These include spatial economic theories, cultural-geographic perspectives, and political-economic perspectives. The authors also acknowledge other recent Brazilian contributions, which support their theory on Brazilian Amazon urbanization. Their thesis is that a variety of principles, which cannot be reduced to one single master principle (such as globalization), are operative in the way city systems are evolving in this rapidly urbanizing frontier region of Brazil.

Browder and Godfrey's methodology follows the area studies approach based significantly on primary sources of information collected through surveys, interviews, and observation. Drawing on comparative household and sectoral surveys they find a varied and dynamic, rapidly changing settlement pattern that is

responding to various forces-corporate, populist, statist, economic, and political. This is the evidence they use to develop a complex theory of causality underlying the rapid urbanization in Brazilian Amazonia.

In this age of post-Fordist, post-modern theories of change, their conclusions -that grand, universally explanatory theories are not too useful in explaining grounded realities-should not come as a surprise.

What is interesting and eminently useful in Browder and Godfrey's book is the fact that the authors back up their statement by providing concrete and detailed evidence of the factors that are driving change.

They point out ways in which change in the populist, agrarian development of Brazilian Amazonia such as in resource extraction or in pioneer agriculture-shapes frontier settlements, which evolve towards increasingly complex, hierarchical, and integrated forms of urbanization. They describe how capital investments, both corporate and governmental, national or foreign, may influence the established or evolving urban hierarchy to produce a distinct urbanization. The reader may or may not find this framework and theory compelling. But the reader will acknowledge that the authors successfully provide detailed documentation substantiating the idea that the forces of urbanization have varied manifestations in different parts of the developing world. By offering a well-articulated comprehensive explanation of urbanization in Brazilian Amazonia, *Rainforest Cities* provides an approach to framing grounded theory that others may emulate in different regions of the world.

In *Traditional and Modern Natural Resource Management in Latin America* Pichón, Uquillas, and Frechione develop a similar "bottom up" perspective seeking insight into the challenge of adopting appropriate resource management techniques in the agricultural development of risk-prone areas. While acknowledging the contributions that green revolution technologies have made to improve agricultural production, the authors point out that only a very small proportion of the world's arable land is suited to this approach. The chapters in this book address the agricultural practices and sustainability of the 1.4 billion people inhabiting risk-prone environments for whom agriculture is the only source of earning a livelihood. It is in this population, the editors of this volume posit, that rural poverty combines with increasing population density to cause unsustainable exploitation of environmentally fragile lands.

The authors articulate a thesis that traditional land use practices of communities occupying risk-prone lands offer insights into how to exploit these fragile environments in a sustained way. They seek to address a central question of the rule of traditional Latin American agricultural management practices in modern Latin American agricultural development. Based on a 1995 workshop sponsored by the World Bank, the book provides observations from multidisciplinary studies of indigenous knowledge systems pertaining to agricultural activities in risk-prone areas. Together they provide insight into the behavior of farmers in these areas. They describe a collection of practices that could be useful to policymakers in framing long-term development strategies. Successfully implemented, these strategies might allow the small and marginalized traditional farming population to continue to subsist in a manner that sustains the environment. The book offers a framework to help conceptualize such approaches, suggesting a creative synthesis of indigenous and scientific knowledge, and articulating ways to implement these approaches.

These two books are good evidence that case study and in situ area and sectoral studies can offer insights for development planning. Whether with respect to the study of urban issues, as in Browder and Godfrey's study of urbanization processes and the development of city systems, or rural issues, as in Pichón, Uquillas, and Frechione's work addressing sustainable systems of agricultural development in risk-prone fragile environments, these books demonstrate the value of in-depth and grounded research. As such they are of interest not only to researchers of Latin American development, but also to the community of scholars interested in grounded study of post-globalization trends in developing countries.

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